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ARNOLD'S INVASION OF VIRGINIA.

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DURING the closing days of 1780 Thomas Jefferson, Governor of Virginia, enjoyed no sinecure. On November 25 the English general, Leslie, had terminated his forty days' occupation of the Chesapeake, in obedience to the order of Cornwallis to reënforce that general in South Carolina. The four thousand Virginian militia, who had hurriedly assembled under Muhlenberg at Portsmouth, had been marched back to Petersburg and disbanded by the Governor's order.¹ Of the one thousand so-called "regulars" that Muhlenberg had painfully collected, Steuben, who assumed military command on December 3, had sent about four hundred under Col. Greene to join the Southern army. Not, alas, until the influence of Muhlenberg, together with the appeals of Cols. Harrison² and Greene, had alone prevented a mutiny of officers and men. The remainder had been returned to Chesterfield C. H., while Steuben writes:³ "The business now before me is to get clothes for those wretches at Chesterfield. They amount to between five and six hundred; but they are so utterly naked that, except I can get some clothes for them, they will all be sick before they can be ordered to march."

The reënforcement of Greene in the Carolinas was the chief object of executive effort. The broad patriotism of Jefferson united with the military insight of Steuben in dictating this course. The conquest by Cornwallis of Georgia and the Carolinas meant the transfer of the seat of war to the soil of Virginia. It meant not only the ravages of hostile armies, but diminished power to resist. Experience elsewhere had shown a disorganized militia unwilling to leave their families unprotected on the route of the invader. It

¹ Muhlenberg's "Life of Muhlenberg."

² Charles Harrison, a brother of Benjamin Harrison, of Berkeley, the signer of the Declaration of Independence.

³ Muhlenberg, p. 220.

meant also hundreds of recruits to the king's standard from the reconquered colonies, many of whom waited only to take up arms the moment that cause seemed successful. Clinton's return of his forces already justified Lord Germaine in declaring that "the American levies in the king's service are more than the whole of the enlisted troops in the service of the Congress."⁴

As the year closes the General Assembly is in session; and if we may believe contemporary letters, Mr. Cleveland was not the first American Executive who found a legislative body "a team of wild horses on his hands." "As Christmas approaches," writes Richard Henry Lee, "so does the anxiety for getting home, and it remains a doubt whether the House can be kept together when the holidays come on."⁵

The first question was naturally how to raise the State's quota of continental troops, afterwards how to arm and equip them. The militia was the basis of our military establishment, of which the number enrolled was, according to Mr. Jefferson (writing in 1781), forty-nine thousand nine hundred and seventy-one. Individually the Virginian militiaman possessed the raw qualities of which soldiers are made; collectively, the Virginian militia was unorganized, undisciplined, poorly armed, wasteful, and in the military sense unreliable.

At this period of the struggle six years of war had somewhat tempered the spirit of military enthusiasm. Volunteering had practically ceased. Promises of pensions and bounties had long failed to bring recruits, even for short enlistments. Bounties had been increased, and imperfect laws for a so-called draft had been in operation since the session of October, 1778. Still the moderate requirements of the Federal Congress were not complied with in any of the States.

In the critical state of our affairs just indicated, repeated recommendations from Congress, from Gen. Washington,

⁴ Clinton-Cornwallis Controversy. *Germaine to Clinton*, March 7, 1781.

⁵ Bland Papers, II., 40-44.

and from Gen. Greene, finally induce the General Assembly of Virginia to more stringent action, and on December 15, 1780, Richard Henry Lee⁶ announces to Theoderick Bland in Congress the passage of an act to raise three thousand men for the war by \$12,000 bounty in hand, together with three hundred acres and an able-bodied negro at the end of the war. "If this does not answer, a draft is to take place." But as the year draws to its close, the savage is added to the civilized foe and domestic disorganization. The Cherokees in the southwest have for some time been engaging the attention of the Governors of Virginia and North Carolina. A more dangerous enemy now appears on the Ohio border. During the last days of December Mr. Jefferson is engaged in preparing that blow which, delivered by George Rogers Clarke, is to negative forever the savage claim of title to the lands of our Northwestern Territory, and banish the scalping knife and the tomahawk from the haunting dreams of settlers' wives.

On Christmas day Jefferson writes to Clarke detailed instructions for his expedition toward Detroit and the Lake Erie country. He gives him the Illinois battalion, Col. Crockett's battalion, and Maj. Slaughter's corps, while swift riders are carrying orders to the county lieutenants⁷ of Fayette, Lincoln, Jefferson, Ohio, Monongalia, Berkeley, Hampshire, Frederick, and Greenbrier.

While Jefferson and Virginia are thus preoccupied, Sir Henry Clinton at New York receives a letter from Col. Balfour in South Carolina addressed to Gen. Leslie at Portsmouth, which had hastened this latter general's departure for the South. A somewhat sensational statement⁸ in this letter as to the condition of Cornwallis's affairs determines Clinton to aim another blow at Virginia. Brig. Gen. Benedict Arnold was intrusted with this service, a fact that afterwards furnished a perhaps not unneeded spur to patriotic resistance.

⁶ Bland Papers, II., 40.

⁷ Jefferson's MS. Letter Book, December 24, 1780.

⁸ Clinton to Cornwallis, December 13, 1780.

On December 11 Arnold began to embark, and by the 20th lay within Sandy Hook with about sixteen hundred men,⁹ comprising the Eightieth Regiment (Scotch or Edinburgh Royal Volunteers, Lieut. Col. Dundas), the Queen's Rangers (Lieut. Col. Simcoe), Arnold's regiment, and two provincial battalions. His transports also carried four hundred bridles and saddles to equip four troops of horse in Virginia, and a number of large cannon.¹⁰

Lieut. Col. Simcoe mentions a circumstance that I think due Arnold to repeat, that on the 20th of December Gen. Arnold issued an order, to use his own words, "against depredations in the country where the expedition was bound to, and in the most forcible terms and strongest manner called upon the officers to second his intentions and the commander in chief's orders in this respect."¹¹

Included within the general purpose of diverting the resources of Virginia from Greene's army in South Carolina, Clinton's orders to Arnold defined two specific objects.¹² Arnold was ordered either to strike at the general depot of supplies for the Southern army at Petersburg, which his chief declared he still had reason to think was considerable; or, failing that, to take and fortify a post at Portsmouth, both for the purpose of a naval station for the British fleet and for assembling the loyalist inhabitants. To collect large numbers of loyal subjects was always a favorite dream of the Home Ministry, and indeed of Clinton, though the officers in the field entertained few illusions on the subject. As Nathaniel Greene wrote in 1778, so it continued to be true: "The limits of the British government in America are their out-sentinels."¹³ It was also strongly recommended to Cornwallis¹² not to break up the post at Portsmouth if again established, the experience of the few loyalists who had declared for the king upon Leslie's arrival and been left un-

⁹ Washington to Rochambeau, January 3, 1781.

¹⁰ Scot's Magazine, 1781, p. 21.

¹¹ Simcoe's Journal, p. 159.

¹² Clinton to Cornwallis, December 13, 1780.

¹³ G. W. Greene, "Life of Maj. Gen. Nathaniel Greene." Volume II., p. 2.

protected upon his withdrawal having been somewhat discouraging to further enterprise in that direction.

It will be seen that though the stores at Petersburg escaped destruction, incalculably more exhaustive was the wasteful system of militia defense; and that the naval station finally established at Yorktown became, with no fault on Clinton's part, a cul-de-sac more fatal than the Caudine Forks.

Scarcely had Arnold begun to embark in New York harbor when Washington, ever watchful and untiring, is informed by spies of the approximate numbers and probable southward destination of the force. This news he immediately conveys both to Steuben¹⁴ and Jefferson, and on December 13, ever hopeful of French naval coöperation, writes also to Rochambeau.¹⁵

Gen. Washington was scarcely the man to cry "Wolf!" Under most circumstances, information deemed by him important enough for communication should have seemed to Mr. Jefferson sufficiently interesting for him to direct investigation, if not immediate action.

Preoccupied with other matters, as we have seen, neither Jefferson nor Steuben seems to have made any plans for obtaining information of the approach of an enemy by sea, much less any preparation for resistance upon such an arrival.

No lookout boats observed the outer waters, and the vessels of the Virginian navy, which an act¹⁶ of the current legislature required to be always patrolling the Chesapeake, seem to have been about the dockyard, for the most part unmanned and out of commission.

On the 21st the expedition of fifty vessels sailed from Sandy Hook, was dispersed by a violent gale, and reassembled on the 26th and 27th off the Capes of Virginia. On December 29 twenty-seven vessels arrived in the Chesapeake. By the 30th the fleet had assembled, lacking three transports, one armed vessel, and about four hundred troops.¹⁷

¹⁴ Washington to Steuben, December 10, 1780.

¹⁵ Washington to Rochambeau, December 13, 1780.

¹⁶ Hening's Statutes at Large, Volume X., 377.

¹⁷ Rivington's New York *Gazette* (Extraordinary), February 3, 1781.

Having captured some small merchant vessels in Hampton Roads, which facilitated the transportation of his troops, Arnold did not wait for his absent vessels. With the same impetuosity that characterized his advance on Quebec in 1775, recalling doubtless how nearly that bold dash had brought him to brilliant success, he pushed up James River against the wind and without waiting for tides. Opposite Williamsburg, Arnold debated whether he should strike that place; but the wind hauling in his favor shortly afterwards, he proceeded, and was detained for the first time at Hood's late in the afternoon of the 3d of January.

At Hood's (now called Old Fort Powhatan) a few pieces¹⁸ mounted on an uninclosed earthwork were manned by about fifty militiamen. One of the vessels of the fleet having accidentally passed the fort with the loss of one man, the place was promptly evacuated upon a demonstration against its rear by a landing party under Simcoe. Dismounting the guns that evening, the troops reëmbarked in the morning, and before noon on the 4th disembarked at Westover. A hurried council of war discussed the country reports as to the force being collected in opposition, Arnold's orders positively forbidding any operations partaking of too much risk. After calculating his chances, the bold adventurer concluded to make a single day's march toward the magazines of Richmond, as well for obtaining more perfect information as for delivering any blow he might be able to strike.

Accordingly, with less than eight hundred men, at two o'clock on the 4th, Arnold marches from Westover, protecting himself by an advance guard under Simcoe. He camps for the night at Four Mile Creek, twelve miles from Richmond, and at one o'clock on the 5th occupies the town,¹⁹

¹⁸ Rivington's *New York Gazette* (Extraordinary), February 3, 1781, says that Hood's was defended by three eighteen-pounders, one twenty-four-pounder, and one eighteen-inch howitzer. Scot's *Magazine*, 1781, says, more credibly, an eight-inch howitzer. Steuben writes to Gen. Greene, January 8, 1781, mentioning only two iron ten-pounders and a brass howitzer.

¹⁹ Richmond at this period contained less than three hundred houses. "There was hardly room for the members of the legislature and the officers of the State." "Richmond: the Capital of Virginia." (John P. Little, 1851.)

pushing forward Simcoe with his Rangers, horse and foot, and the flank companies of the Eightieth Regiment to destroy the foundry, the boring mill, the magazine, and other buildings about Westham, seven miles higher up the river.

It is unnecessary to describe the details of the advance by the Darbytown Road, nor the maneuvers between Almond Creek and Gillis Creek to flank the two hundred militia who alone had been collected for the defense of the capital. Arnold told Simcoe that they wouldn't fight, and the truth is it would have been folly to attempt it. It is sufficient to say that throughout the advance of thirty-three miles not a gun was fired, and the invader found no obstacles more serious than a few broken bridges on the country road.

Having accomplished his designs of the day before, and apprehensive of being cut off from his shipping, Arnold intended to return early in the morning of the 6th; but so wearied were many of his men by their exertions, especially in destroying five or six tons of powder at Westham, that he was forced to delay his march. During this morning (the 6th) several other buildings were destroyed by fire, and, except in consideration of the poverty of the government, an inconsiderable quantity of public and private stores, principally rum, salt, and leather. Though Richmond was a mere village at the time, it seems certain from contemporary accounts that Lossing, Sloane, and other writers have exaggerated the injury inflicted upon that place by this incursion.²⁰ Some of Arnold's soldiers, finding rum, increased his disorganization, so that when he began to retire about noon in a driving rain and over wet roads, an opportunity for a brilliant retaliatory stroke was presented, especially after darkness set in. No active hand was ready to deal the blow, and he arrived safely at Westover on the 7th, carrying with him three hundred sadly missed muskets and five brass four-pounders.

We left Mr. Jefferson on Christmas day busied with the details of Clarke's expedition to the Northwest. Early in

²⁰ *Virginia Gazette*, January 13, 1781. Jefferson to Washington, January 10, 1781. Cf. Gordon and Lossing.

the morning of Sunday, the last day of the old year, Gen. Nelson breaks in upon his excellency's well-earned rest with a letter from Mr. Jacob Wray, of Hampton—"from a private hand," as Mr. Jefferson says. No officer of government, but Mr. Jacob Wray, of Hampton, first sounds the alarm. Mr. Wray says that twenty-seven sail were in the Roads just below Willoughby Point in the morning of December 29. After hasty conference Gen. Nelson is sent off to the lower country "with full powers," Capt. Maxwell of the navy is written to, and orders given for stationing expresses to Hampton.

No other steps are taken, Mr. Wray not having been careful to state whether the sail were "friends or foes." Steuben had no illusions on this subject, and two officers sent by him down the south side of the river were not instructed to inquire as to this point.²¹ Beyond reporting Mr. Wray's letter to the General Assembly and sending to Petersburg for one hundred stand of arms, nothing is done on Monday, the 1st.

On the 2d, at ten o'clock in the morning, a letter from Nathaniel Burwell, county lieutenant of James City, confirms at last the hostile character of the fleet, and reports that they have advanced to Warrasqueake Bay (about what is now called Mulberry Point).

Arnold had then been beating against a head wind for four days in the waters of Virginia, and Mr. Jefferson writes to Nelson that Mr. Wray's intelligence "had become totally disbelieved."²²

Everything is now activity. There is no embodied force except Steuben's still naked conscripts at Chesterfield C. H. Steuben asks for four thousand militia, and Mr. Jefferson writes: "We mean to have four thousand six hundred militia in the field."²²

The assembly, who have been "kept together" through the holidays, rise on the 2d after the news has been commu-

²¹ Steuben to Washington, January 8, 1781.

²² Jefferson to Nelson, January 2, 1781.

nicated, and furnish, according to the idea of the Executive, an economical, if not a speedy, body of couriers.

Accordingly on the 2d a circular letter is delivered to the delegates addressed to the county lieutenants of Henrico, Hanover, Goochland, Fluvanna, Albemarle, Amherst, Chesterfield, Powhatan, Cumberland, Dinwiddie, Amelia, Buckingham, Bedford, Halifax, Charlotte, Prince Edward, Lunenburg, Mecklenburg, Sussex, Southampton, and Brunswick calling for one-half of their respective militia; and to the same officers of Shenandoah, Rockingham, Augusta, and Rockbridge demanding a thousand riflemen of the mountains.

“That there may not be a moment’s delay, let them come in detached parties,” though he has to add, “bringing arms if they have them.”²³

Lieut. Reid,²⁴ at Brunswick C. H., is also ordered to bring his troop to Petersburg and a new authority is forwarded to Nelson²⁵ to call on the lower militia as he thinks proper. Of the Continentals at Chesterfield C. H., only one hundred and fifty are fit for duty. Steuben orders them to Petersburg to cover stores, at the same time ordering the stores to be removed. Though on the afternoon of the 3d the enemy are reported at Jamestown, the correspondence of that day shows only the appointment of Mr. John Brown as commissioner under the act for procuring provisions, and a letter to Col. Skillern, saying that light horse cannot be armed. “The late invasions have left us unfurnished with swords and pistols.” On the morning of the 4th Steuben, knowing that the fleet is at Westover, is satisfied that Richmond is their object. Attempting to raise a force to check their progress, he can assemble only one hundred men. These he sends under Maj. Dick with orders to fire at them from every favorable location; but, to use the General’s own words, “These orders were, however, badly executed.”²⁶

²³ Jefferson’s MS. Letter Book, Circular, January 2, 1781.

²⁴ Idem, Jefferson to Reid, January 2, 1781.

²⁵ Idem, Jefferson to Nelson, January 2, 1781.

²⁶ Steuben to Washington, January 8, 1781.

At five o'clock in the afternoon of the 4th the enemy are known to be drawn up at Westover at 2 P.M. of the same day; and hurried orders go to Henrico, Hanover, Goochland, Powhatan, and Chesterfield "for every man of your county able to bear arms" ²⁷ to rendezvous at Westham.

In a similar letter of the same date to Col. Banister (at Petersburg), county lieutenant of Dinwiddie, the disorganization of the time is most plainly apparent. Col. Banister is informed that he can arm his men from certain wagons loaded with arms at Chesterfield C. H., "under orders to proceed to Powhatan C. H."

After doing what he could to remove stores ²⁸ from Richmond, Petersburg, Chesterfield C. H., and Westham, Steuben ordered his battalion of one hundred and fifty Continentals to meet their naked brothers opposite Westham, and in the evening "thought it prudent" to retire to Manchester.

Col. Taylor, at Winchester, is ordered to move the prisoners of the Saratoga convention to Maryland; and the Governor, having done everything a civilian patriot could think of doing, "went to Tuckahoe and lodged." ²⁹

Early on the 5th Mr. Jefferson is at Westham superintending the work of removal of arms and ammunition, which the day before he had ordered to be carried on all night. He then goes to Manchester, sees the enemy at a distance, fails to meet Steuben, whom he had expected at Chetwood's, and, mounting a fresh horse, proceeds in the afternoon to Col. Fleming's, for "quarters." ²⁹ Unfortunately, he failed to meet also some three hundred militia who had reached Westham on their way down, but dispersed upon intelligence of the enemy's approach, though arms were being brought over the river for their use. ³⁰

On the 6th, when so much might have been done, Mr. Jef-

²⁷ Jefferson's MS. Letter Book, Circular, January 4, 1781.

²⁸ "Of their artillery, I secured myself five pieces which were mounted; the rest, . . . three brass and a number of iron pieces, fell into the enemy's hands." Steuben to Washington, January 8, 1781.

²⁹ Jefferson's Diary, 1781.

³⁰ Steuben to Washington, January 8, 1781.

person, after going to Westham for "books and papers,"²⁹ retires to his family at Fine Creek, in Powhatan.

In the morning Steuben collects three hundred and fifty men and two pieces of artillery, prepared to dispute the passage of the river at Manchester, but the enemy retiring as they had come, he marches in the evening of the 6th to Warwick for the defense of flour and grain stored there.

Meanwhile Nelson, also with three hundred and fifty men, is at Long Bridge, on the Chickahominy.³¹

When Arnold goes into camp this night, he is between Steuben and Nelson and not twelve miles from either. His less than eight hundred men are wet, worn out, and beyond the control of their officers. Exertion, plunder, and rum have done their work on men who for nearly a month have been on shipboard.

It is true that Steuben was south of the river, but there were boats enough at Manchester. Nelson tells us also that the rain damaged his powder.

It is perhaps unfair to hope for such a feat from untrained soldiers, but at the same time it is interesting to speculate upon the crushing blow that might have been delivered on that "tempestuous night," had there been previously proper military communication, and had the execution been intrusted to such an officer as Light Horse Harry Lee, or to such as his rival, the British Tarleton.

On the 7th, while Arnold was approaching Westover and while Steuben was at Osborne's, on the James, some privateers attached to Arnold's fleet came up the Appomattox as far as Broadway and captured a number of tobacco-laden vessels. This seems to have been too much for the patience of the militia of the south side. Two companies of Col. Banister's³² militia, under the orders of Gen. Smallwood,³³ attack them so fiercely that, though the militia have only small arms,³⁴ the privateers are obliged to abandon their prizes

²⁹ Nelson to Steuben, January 7, 1781.

³² Banister to Bland, January, 1781. Bland Papers.

³³ Steuben to Washington, January 8, 1781.

³⁴ Jefferson to Virginia delegates in Congress, January 18, 1781.

and proceed down the river. By the time they arrive at City Point, Gen. Smallwood has hastily mounted some ship guns,³⁴ and they escape only after being considerably shattered, losing a captain and some men.

When Arnold arrives at Westover, on the 7th, his detachment is in no condition for fresh enterprise. He remains there for three days to refresh and reestablish the troops. He is not disturbed. Nelson reconnoiters him from the hill beyond Herring Creek, but nothing of interest occurs except that on the night of the 8th Simcoe, sent out with forty horsemen to gain intelligence, deceives Nelson's videttes and dashes into his encampment at Charles City C. H. The suddenness of the attack and the darkness of the night, together with a stratagem of this bold officer, disperses the militia utterly. Some are wounded and a few captured,³⁵ while Simcoe returns with a loss of one sergeant³⁶ killed, and three men wounded.

Jefferson's diary of January 7 states that there are two thousand two hundred and fifty men in the field. Steuben's report of the following day reckons only one thousand one hundred and fifty, not counting the naked Continentals, who are sent back to Chesterfield C. H. as incompetent to take the field.

The militia now begin to come in in considerable numbers, but there are no arms to give them.³⁷ This is "rather from want of arrangement," says Steuben, "than from anything else. Those of the State were so scattered in removing them on the alarm that their officers cannot collect them again."³⁸ Gen. Nelson, however, has fifteen hundred stand, and only five hundred men.³⁹ Col. Banister⁴⁰ dwells on the

³⁵ Four killed and wounded. Seven or eight taken. Jefferson to Virginia delegates in Congress, January 18, 1781.

³⁶ This sergeant lies buried at Westover.

³⁷ On the 14th and 15th of January Jefferson suggests to Steuben and Nelson the discharge of such militia as cannot be armed "that the law for raising new levies may be enforced in the counties to which the militia shall return," and on the 29th the same subject is renewed. Jefferson's MS. Letter Book, 1781.

³⁸ Steuben to Greene, January 11, 1781.

³⁹ Steuben to Washington, January 8, 1781.

⁴⁰ Banister to Bland, January, 1781.

same state of disorder, and St. George Tucker⁴¹ so late as January 21, writes of Richmond "all is confusion there still!"

On January 9 Arnold was reënforced by his delinquent vessels and four hundred troops, and on the 10th, at noon, he got under way from Westover, observed by Steuben from Coggin's Point.

It had been found impossible to repair the battery at Hood's; but Steuben, believing that the enemy would land to reconnoiter it, posted Col. Clarke in ambush with three hundred militia and thirty horse.

Arnold, on the other hand, having heard there was a party of militia at Bland's Mills, anchored at Fleur de Hundred and proposed to surprise them by a night attack. The infantry of the Queen's Rangers, Col. Robinson's Provincial Regiment, and the Eightieth under Col. Dundas were landed. The night was very dark. Almost immediately they struck a small picket sent forward as a decoy, and, following rapidly over a road hemmed in by a thick wood, Col. Robinson's regiment suddenly received a heavy fire. Though twenty men were killed and wounded, Robinson's men were not broken, and after returning the fire, charged resolutely with the bayonet. The militia dispersed immediately, but Simcoe halted "seeing," as he says, "no probability of accomplishing the business he had been ordered upon."

Returning to Hood's, Arnold utterly dismantled the fort, and, having reëmbarked the following morning, fell down the river.

On the 11th Steuben sent three hundred infantry and two troops of horse to Cabin Point, ordered five hundred and sixty south side militia, then on their march to join him, to reënforce Gen. Nelson near Williamsburg, and halted Gen. Weedon at Hanover C. H., with directions to cover the iron works at Fredericksburg.

On the 13th Steuben marched with seven hundred militia to Cabin Point, and on the 14th Arnold landed twenty-two

⁴¹ Tucker to Banister, January 21, 1781.

miles below at Harding's Ferry,⁴² and marched to Smithfield. A detachment of three hundred infantry and fifty horse were directed to harass his rear, under the belief that the militia of the lower counties under Col. Parker would oppose him in front. Col. Parker had retired, and nothing was accomplished. On the 15th four hundred more militia who had that day joined under Gen. Lawson were sent forward for a similar purpose, but were likewise too late. Sending across Pagan Creek an advance guard on the 15th to explore the passage of the streams and disperse militia pickets, Arnold continued his march on the 16th, and on the same day was ferried over the Nansemond at Sleepy Hole by his own boats. Here he encamped that night, while Gen. Lawson, joined by Col. Parker, entered Smithfield. Simcoe was now sent forward to Portsmouth to prevent the citizens from burning that town, while Arnold reëmbarked, and landed with his whole force⁴³ at Portsmouth on the 19th.

A council of war having unanimously determined that the force at his disposal was unequal to the task of dislodging Arnold from Portsmouth, Steuben now made disposition to confine the enemy to that post.⁴⁴

Col. Parker, with the Suffolk militia, held the advance at Riddick's Mills with a small picket four miles farther in his front. Lawson, with nine hundred infantry and a troop of state horse, was posted at McMay's Mills, four miles from Smithfield, with a small detachment at Suffolk. There were pickets along the Nansemond river, and Gen. Muhlenberg, commanding the whole, lay in reserve at Cabin Point with eight hundred infantry and Armand's Legion. On the other side of the river Nelson, with one thousand infantry

⁴² Near Cobham.

⁴³ Arnold's naval force consisted of the *Charon*, forty-four guns, *Commodore* (Captain) Symonds, the *Amphitrite*, *Iris*, *Thames*, and *Charlestown*, frigates, the *Forrey*, twenty guns, two sloops of war, a privateer ship, and two brigs.

⁴⁴ Jefferson says there were about three thousand seven hundred militia embodied on January 18, 19. This total includes the detachment under Gen. Weeden near Fredericksburg. MS. Letter Book, 1781.

and some volunteer horse, guarded the country from Williamsburg to Newport News.

Having made these dispositions, Steuben returned to Richmond to resume his duties in supplying Greene's army, and in following him thither we shall learn something of the embarrassments of the Executive.

Mr. Jefferson can never be charged with lack of industry. His active mind ranges every department of affairs. Perhaps the multitude of his responsibilities injure the quality of the performance of his higher functions. Certainly in no well-ordered government would such details be expected from the chief magistrate. His voluminous correspondence ranges from a pressing search for "pack thread" and "one good blacksmith (a white man)" to diplomatic correspondence with the French Minister, Congress, the Commander in Chief, and state and foreign governments.

Intelligence is always difficult for him to obtain. On the 15th he has not been able to locate the enemy for four days,⁴⁵ and remembering the good offices of Mr. Jacob Wray,⁴⁶ he writes to him again, urging him to use the line of expresses from Hampton, somewhat naïvely adding that two days were lost in the late incursion, "which would have added so much to the collection of militia in this quarter as to have rendered doubtful at least whether the enemy could have got here."

Nobody more than Jefferson appreciated the paramount importance of holding up the hands of Greene in the Carolinas. Yet he could not bring himself to execute the draft law in those counties whose militia was in the field. He writes to Steuben urging the release of all militia not actually needed on the ground that "if this incursion should much longer postpone the execution of the late law for raising new levies, it will be among its worst effects."⁴⁷

He not only has in charge the preparation of plans⁴⁸ for rebuilding the foundry, etc., at Westham, but finds it necessa-

⁴⁵ Jefferson to Nelson, January 15, 1781.

⁴⁶ Jefferson to Jacob Wray, January 15, 1781.

⁴⁷ Jefferson to Steuben, January 13, 14, 1781.

⁴⁸ Jefferson to Senf, January 13, 1781.

ry to make an appeal to "gentlemen of public spirit"⁴⁹ to send their mechanics to labor on the work.

He is engaged in a controversy with Gov. Lee,⁵⁰ of Maryland, as to which State shall support the prisoners of the Saratoga Convention, and as to the disposition of the specific quotas of Virginia under the Continental requisition of November 1, 1780, which he elaborately discusses. At the same time he writes to the Continental quartermaster that he has "sent to Fredericksburg for camp kettles."⁵¹

On the 16th of January Jefferson gives direction for the building of certain portable flat-bottomed boats that Washington had suggested to him on November 8 for the use of the Virginia Army of Observation in crossing the numerous streams of Virginia. This delay is attributable to the fact that Mr. Jefferson differed with Gen. Washington as to the military utility of these craft, and not to procrastination.⁵²

The militia are always giving trouble. As late as February 2 only one-third of the counties had made any returns at all,⁵³ though the proper execution of the draft law was dependent on an accurate statement from each county.

There is also a bitter controversy with the enemy as to the status of individuals capable of being paroled, which brings forth a proclamation from the Governor dated January 19, and a letter to Nelson dated January 25 directing that General to hang an equal number of British prisoners, should the enemy hang individuals who had broken the paroles declared by the proclamation to be ineffective.

Finally, there is not a dollar, even of paper money, left in the treasury, and on January 23 the Legislature is summoned to convene on the first day of March.

[To be concluded in the next number.]

FRANCIS RIVES LASSITER.

⁴⁹ Jefferson's MS. Letter Book, January 15, 1781.

⁵⁰ Jefferson to Lee, January 15, 1781.

⁵¹ Jefferson to Cartington, January 16, 1781.

⁵² Jefferson to Maxwell, January 16, 1781.

⁵³ Jefferson to Col. John Syme, February 2, 1781.